

HAVE YOUR SAY IN PREPARING IPA III!

FEEDBACK ON THE CONSULTATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN ALBANIA

Do you think that there are thematic priorities or other important elements missing in the proposed structure of the programming framework?

- As part of thematic Window 4-Competitiveness and inclusive growth, we suggest to add: Support to the development of social economy. Economic and social development is an overarching thematic objective, and development of social economy is a very important part of that. There is lots of potential for growth in Western Balkans countries with this regard, and having in mind the cross-cutting nature of social entrepreneurship which incorporates aspects of economy, social and labor market inclusion, sustainable development, environment, agriculture, innovation, supporting social entrepreneurship development will contribute to Competitiveness and inclusive growth thematic window.
- The “resilience” concept is mentioned as part of Window 3. Overall Objective two, (resilience to climate change). We suggest expanding the use of the concept and not limiting it to climate change. For example: given recent earthquake events in Albania, or floods over the years in a good part of our territory, overall objective in window 3 could be “Mitigation of and resilience to climate change and other natural hazards/disasters”. While resilience is also used today in terms of economic resilience (generally the need for economies to recover after a crisis, or after debt), territorial resilience, social, etc. For this reason perhaps the concept itself should be reflected / found in other windows.

Another very important element is: Shrinking space for civil society. While civic space challenges vary according to particular national contexts, there is a trend toward restricting civic space that should be considered as very important and should be addressed with due attention. Civil society organizations play an oversight role over democratic institutions and elected representatives, defend the democratic rights of citizens, and in many cases provide public and social services. As demands increase on civil society organizations to provide public services, protect vulnerable citizens and communities and hold public and elected representatives accountable, supporting civil society organizations’ resilience is very important to endure the pressure of public institutions and funding constraints.

- With regards to the indicated budget for each Window, considering the importance of the Territorial and Cross-border Cooperation for the regional development, we suggest an increase in the proposed budget for window 5.

Do you have any specific suggestions in relation to the process of preparation of the strategic response by IPA III beneficiaries?

- The early involvement and in all stages of the civil society organization for the preparation of the strategic response, is very important. This, in order to get its opinion on issues and priorities, proposals for strategic sector-by-sector interventions, and to benefit from the

extensive expertise that civil society has in designing programs / projects and their implementation

- To ensure a meaningful involvement of CSOs in the process, clear messages should be given and clear conditions should be set by EU institutions, on the procedures for the preparation of the strategic response. The involvement of the CSOs in the process should be criteria for the evaluation of the strategic response.
- The process should be transparent from the very first start, and continuous information should be provided in all stages of the process. It should involve all stakeholders (CSOs included) and not only as part of the preparation of the strategic response but also for its implementation (monitoring and evaluation).
- Units in charge for the preparation of the strategic response should be established in the governmental institutions that will be in charge for this. Their contacts should be public, and CSOs and all stakeholders should have access to information and participation in all stages of the preparation of the strategic response
- The process should be structured, so to allow to all stakeholders (CSOs included) to provide qualitative and timely feedback.
- The process should be characterized by continuous and sustained communication with civil society actors and beyond.
- Monitoring by EU institutions throughout the process is needed, to ensure the legitimacy of the process.
- Support by EU institutions is also needed to ensure the quality preparation of the strategic response.

Do you have any other comment or suggestion?

- The involvement of civil society organizations, through this consultation process, is very important and very much appreciated by us. Through IPA I and II, CSOs gathered experience that can be shared and contribute significantly in all phases of the IPA III programming and implementation. It is very important this consultation to continue in the next phases as well, as well as to give clear messages by EU to the government representatives since from this preparation phase, on the importance of a real and timely involvement of civil society in all stages of IPA III implementation.
- Projects proposed by beneficiary countries should clearly define the role and involvement of civil society in design and implementation phase. A minimum percentage of funding managed through civil society organizations should be set up in order to insure CSOs participation. Otherwise, the experience has shown that it does not work. This is extremely important as a way to foster the working partnership of both actors (government and civil society).
- As IPA III funding is going to be accessed by beneficiary countries on competitive basis, it is of crucial importance to preserve the level of financial support for the civil society sector, regardless to the results of this process. In fact, it is important to ensure the activity of CSOs in the sectors where government will not be successful in accessing funding because of underperformance.
- We feel it is important to reiterate that funding for CSOs should be managed directly by EU structures (Commission, EUDs) and not government structures. Lack of trust and transparency mechanisms in place, including political situation in the country do not provide the needed guaranties.

List of Civil Society Organisations who participated in this process:

ANTTARC—Albanian National Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center
Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development
Different and Equal
European Movement in Albania - EMA
Initiative for Social Change - ARSIS
Institute for Democracy and Mediation – IDM
International Association for Solidarity – SHIS
Partners Albania for Change and Development
Resource Environmental Center – Albania (REC Albania)
Save the Children – Albania
Social Contract Institute (SCI)
Terre des Hommes
World Vision Albania